

Pembroke Pigskin: A Practical Application of Convergence

Honors Project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.....	1
THE INCREDIBLE SYNTHESIS OF MODERN MEDIA.....	2
CONFLICT WITHIN CONVERGENCE.....	9
PRODUCITON OUTLINE.....	16
REFLECTION.....	17
REFERENCES.....	22
APPENDIX A.....	25

ABSTRACT

PEMBROKE PIGSKIN: A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CONVERGENCE

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This project encapsulates two parts. The written portion contains two introductory papers about media convergence. *The Incredible Synthesis of Modern Media* explores the positive aspects of convergence's development. *Conflict Within Convergence* looks at the negative aspects of convergence. Particularly, how business practices may overwhelm media quality.

The digital portion of the project is the author's personal experience with convergence. *Pembroke Pigskin*, a website launched by the author in August 2007, contains numerous articles and photos pertaining to UNC Pembroke football. The website provided the author an opportunity to learn HTML (hypertext markup language) and engage in a real convergence experiment.

In 2008, *Pembroke Pigskin* underwent a redesign that improved both its appearance and functionality. The website can also be found on the second page of a Google search with the terms "UNCP football," which the author considers an achievement.

Also, the paper *Conflict Within Convergence* was nominated for publication in UNCP's *ReVisions*.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Every person should understand the importance of media convergence. I wanted to wade right into its depths and behold its promises. These two ideas drove this project to show just how media formats—text, audio, and video—are combining to create new ways of gathering and presenting information. The Internet is the obvious destination for convergence as it easily handles any media format.

There are many benefits and faults trailing convergence. Which mindset will dominate the landscape of future media, profit or content? Will the instantaneous broadcast of information lead to its simultaneous dilution? These questions are further discussed in the two papers, *The Incredible Synthesis of Modern Media* and *Conflict Within Convergence*.

To catch a glimpse of this future, I created a news website, *Pembroke Pigskin*, dedicated to UNCP football. I tested the feasibility of convergence by acting as a reporter, photographer, and webmaster. A concern of convergence is the workload of its media professionals, which I've confirmed as justifiable.

Similar to other innovations, there are no simple answers concerning whether convergence is “good” or “bad”. It is inevitable either way.

THE INCREDIBLE SYNTHESIS OF MODERN MEDIA

The process of media evolution is taking place right in front of every person on the planet; they need to only look at themselves as its driving force. This nearly unstoppable movement is called convergence, which involves different kinds of media—video, text, radio, and the Internet— melding together to form a singular method of mass communication. News, information, and entertainment would be drastically simplified to one unified media source. Unfortunately, it's a geologically slow process as the current population is only experiencing the outer layer in what convergence can eventually offer. The Internet provides a suitable platform for the condensation of media, as it is able to make exceptional use of traditional forms of communication like text, video, and sound. However, the Internet is only a piece of the contemporary convergence puzzle.

The traditional forms of media are just now trying breaching their protective shells to try radical methods of presenting their content. The distinct realms of newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet are just now starting to seep into each other and blur their boundaries. In a modern world, those concrete distinctions that once ruled the media industry are more detrimental than in previous years. Unequivocally, this trend provides numerous benefits for an increasingly fragmented audience and struggling media outlets.

The time that any single person has to devote to media has changed drastically over the past half century from a few television channels and a local newspaper to

hundreds of television channels, national and local papers, the Internet, satellite radio and countless others. Marcel Fenez states, "In a converged media economy, the scarce resource is consumer time and attention (1)." This is the necessity of convergence for the individual media consumer. An eclectic approach to mass communication is provides every piece of essential information in a succinct format.

In many ways, convergence is a consumer-driven phenomenon. The population's newly divided attention has caused a shift in media strategy to deliver news, information and entertainment where it is most convenient. This change is clearly articulated by Randy Covington in *Myths and Realities of Convergence* that:

Newspaper circulation in the United States is falling at a rate of roughly five percent a year, and viewership of television news is in decline, while new media outlets and fresh formats for telling news are growing explosively. Internet penetration in the United States approaches 80 percent, and high-speed broadband accessibility is becoming commonplace. (54)

So, this has caused standard forms of media to re-evaluate their missed opportunities by distributing messages in a single. Those avenues are missed among a younger crowd, which have the lowest newspaper readership due to their perpetually "wired" nature. This trend is also being reflected in the general population.

A report by BIGresearch found that in the market of Columbus, Ohio that half of the consumers used multiple media concurrently (Quinn 34). This proposition is

frightening for traditional media, as they struggle for the attention of someone who is actively ingesting their content. Clearly, these statistics show that the individual appetite for media has grown considerably. Yet, the traditional forms are quickly looking more like the kids' menu than a suitable entrée. Why settle for the grayed chicken fingers, provided by the local newspaper, when the option for an Alaskan crab buffet is readily available on any computer. More people come to this realization every day.

For media consumers, convergence also fulfills the news value of timeliness—receiving news and information in a suitably quick manner—at an entirely new level than previously imagined. Instead of waiting for the nightly newscast or the next day's paper, cell phones and computers can be updated with breaking news instantly.

This is especially important in the realm of journalism, as timeliness is one of seven sacred news values that form the foundation of the industry. This is due only to the demands of the collective public to have events quickly transcribed, summarized, and disseminated to them in a timely manner. The Internet has made the public more expectant of media to make news a liquid, perpetual process rather than bound to a rigid schedule.

These aspects give media consumers an incredible amount of power and allows for a greater degree of control over media intake. For the longest time, consumers were trapped between waiting for news either through the morning newspaper, 24-hour news networks, and the nightly news. Even popular television

shows are still set on strict schedules that demand viewers bend their timetables simply to watch an enjoyable program. None of these are tailored to any individual person, which is the exact strength of converged media.

With the Internet, the ability to have “on-demand” information and entertainment is a reality. There are numerous news websites—affiliated and unaffiliated with traditional news sources—that provide updates at all hours so there are no gaps in the news cycle. Also, users of any news site can easily distinguish between what information is relevant to them simply by scanning the headlines for the various articles. In this case, a well-written headline is even more useful in converged rather than traditional media. Scanning the headlines of *The New York Times* website is far more graceful than with the actual newspaper, which is bulky on its lightest days. People are also able to use Google to rent TV shows and basketball games, instead of being restricted to watching them during normal time slots (Oser 2). So, people are able to set their own schedule and fit media into their lives as they deem necessary. They don’t have to slog through a newspaper or lose sleep watching a new episode of a television show.

Many people will see a wealth of traditional media and think that convergence’s impact is exaggerated. Currently they are correct in many respects. Society is still a ways off from a singular streaming source of media and entertainment. What is true is that society is only starting to see the very beginnings of convergence in a rough and patchwork state. A better understanding of the media business provides an explanation as to why change has happened at all.

Traditional forms of media have survived for decades; their numerous successes have hardened their dissemination strategies. Due to their domination of individual markets, traditional media are mostly profitable ventures due to their large amount of advertising. And so, organizations have dutifully maintained this structure for a majority of the last century as radio, television and newspapers have fiercely guarded their own safe havens. The Internet disturbed this equilibrium as it quickly swiped a majority of attention away from newspapers and television to their computer monitors. Now, audience statistics simply don't add up for old media because the collective attention has become more divided and difficult to predict. It is in this environment that intelligent media professionals realized their growing antiquity, stood up, and took the first baby steps of convergence.

These initial steps are the cross training of media professionals and the merging of traditional media. That means individuals in each profession are learning to become more versatile by acquiring more skills in other forms of mass communication. An example would be a reporter doing a podcast, appearing on camera, and writing an article all from the same news event. This change has created cooperation out of rivalry with usually competing forms of media now working together to help fill the gaps present in each form of presentation. In other cases, it means putting every form of media essentially under one roof.

This was the particular case for the Nordjyske newspaper in Northern Denmark, which was quickly losing readership and company morale. Editor-in-chief Ulrick Haggerup decided that in order to avoid the fate of other Danish newspapers—

tanking financially—convergence was the only rescuer. Haggerup himself says, “in fact, this was and is a survival strategy while also providing a more satisfying and fun life for reporters (18).” What was once solely a newspaper for northern Denmark, became Nordjyske Media that had a website, a 24-hour cable show, and two printed publications. Haggerup also stressed that the focus wasn’t cutting costs but providing great news content to the public in a form that suited them (Haggerup 18).

This is precisely the approach that media outlets should take in providing news and entertainment to the public. It is too drastic a step to scrap every traditional form of media and focus entirely on providing media over the Internet since many consumers are still attached to those older forms. A cleverly divided approach focused on providing good content satisfies every media consumer. A newer paragon of media professional is willing to properly use each of convergence’s tools. Haggerup links the evolution of newspapers to Darwin’s theory of evolution in that, “It won’t be the biggest news organization, nor the newspaper that now has the highest circulation or has the editors and reporters earning the highest salary. It will be the news entity that learns how to adapt fast to the changing media habits of those it serves...(19)”

Convergence is an incredible benefit of living in a technological world. It will gradually provide the tools to access news and entertainment to give individuals a new level of informational freedom. Media organizations are starting to see where the eyes of the general public are heading and are shedding their former selves to become more presentable to a technologically adept audience. This will remarkably improve

the communication between the media and the public. The dynamic nature of the Internet allows both editors and the audience to simultaneously communicate. While the traditional media still hold their purpose, it is certainly in a lessened role to the possibilities that online and on-demand media provide. The great epiphany of convergence is that the media are followers that depend on the public in order to survive as successful businesses. Demands of media to provide instant information are difficult to meet, but that is the factor that the Internet has added to the world of information. Honestly, the developments are beneficial to both sides as the public gets exactly what they want while media are spurred to innovate instead of grasping to their outdated conventions of dissemination. Convergence is a harsh morning light for people dreaming of simpler ideas in media. Hiding under a blanket will not change the fact that a new day has arisen.

CONFLICT WITHIN CONVERGENCE

Convergence is the force that is combining older forms of media—newspapers, television, and radio—into a singular form that could possibly reside on the Internet. This is an undeniable trend in the media industry with an ever-increasing number of media outlets working together to reap the perceived benefits of convergence, one of which is bringing information to the masses in whatever format they choose.

In all honesty, convergence is a beautiful theoretical trend. Media would become the Northwest Passage of information and entertainment by providing placid waters to every media destination.

Much like the fabled Passage, an idealized form of convergence may fall into the annals of human mythology. Converged media will likely resemble the typical exploratory voyage that leaves its passengers—the public—starved and filled with mutinous rage. A rouge wave of depleted information will leave even hardened seafarers with salt-stung eyes.

How can convergence have such noble possibilities yet become damaging to the flow of information?

Essentially, the public has been adventurous in adopting more forms of media—like the Internet—and using these forms as vessels to sail beyond the familiar territory of traditional information intake. As this has occurred the older forms of media have found their mainland domains depressingly uninhabited. And so,

television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet have begun to band together for a necessary venture. The initial relationships are a bit strained, as once dueling forces must work together to liberate the public of its valuable treasure: attention.

Initial caution should be heeded through a tale of one brave (or foolish) lad who built his own raft out of HTML branches and CSS vines to test the invitingly dangerous waters of convergence.

It's an ironic twist how my own website dedicated to UNC-Pembroke football, Pembroke Pigskin (www.pembrokepigskin.com), has become the greatest lesson in convergence than I could have possibly imagined. I spent a ludicrous amount of time early in the semester putting its component parts together—HTML files, photos, insightful articles—and acquiring the necessary web space needed to get online. Once I was able to accomplish that—about 4 a.m. on some Tuesday—there was jubilation and relief. I had my own website and, more importantly, my own journalistic voice for the first time in college. It was a bit too much relief in retrospect. I didn't quite understand the workload that would be required since I wore every single "hat" my website had to offer. I was constantly coding, writing, editing, and resizing photos along with every other responsibility of a college student. One Saturday night I spent the entire night working—surely an anomaly—putting up a very brief story and pictures about the homecoming game the team had won along with the previous week's road game. It was probably the least entertaining Saturday night in recent undergraduate memory. That event is slowly fading into distant memory and the last time I updated the site. I've reported on many other football

games, but I haven't uploaded anything due to my exhaustion after that single event. In the journalistic world, this is an offensive practice. Perhaps some people would classify my "mental exhaustion" as "laziness," but I would obviously disagree. My meticulous nature demands perfection from every aspect of the site, from its layout to the actual content, but I simply don't have the time to pour into it like earlier in the semester. This experience could have thrown any positive outlook I had for convergence into serious doubt. Fortunately, I still believe strongly in the idea of convergence, but it is impossible to achieve through Herculean efforts of individuals. Luckily, I don't have to make a living off of my website like a baggy-eyed, caffeinated journalist would for an expansive media giant.

Imagine these media giants as fearsome, gargantuan sea monsters that continually lurk in the watery depths looking to snack on any passing ship to fulfill their insatiable appetite. Any traveler should fear their shadows just beneath the glassy surface and the threat they pose to a beneficial form of convergence.

The concentration of media ownership is a particularly worrisome aspect of convergence, as it limits the number of perspectives available to the public. As recently as October 18, 2007, the Federal Communications Commission was hoping to loosen the current media ownership laws that prohibit owning a newspaper and a television or radio station in the same city (Labaton). Numerous ownership groups are certainly licking their collective lips for the possible repeal that would allow them to feast on any wayward media outlet of their choosing. Currently, some newspapers and broadcasting operations work together but under different ownership, thus

evading the law entirely. This is a particularly dark side of convergence for the public due to the reduction of competition. Eventually, 50-80 companies will control the global information network, while the United States will be dominated by five to eight (Quinn 125). News organizations were previously able to achieve a high quality of reporting due to the competitive nature of traditional media. They each have honed their strengths over the perpetual battle for public attention. Television has brevity and visual appeal while newspapers have in-depth stories and unparalleled accuracy. In the case of converged media, these two forms work side by side—either as cooperative partners or under the same ownership—and are likely required to share the same information on a news story. The result is an unfulfilling slab of monotony. Despite any journalist's best intentions, there is a certain amount of personal interpretation and influence that goes into any given story. In a converged media operation the same reporter's information would be used online, in the television and radio broadcast, and retooled for the next day's newspaper. While working as a reporter in Chicago, Joe Kaplan has suffered through this still-awkward phase of convergence while covering a story:

A small device was inserted into my ear and an equally small device was clipped onto my tie. I then answered questions from a broadcast journalist miles away while I looked into the camera that was pointed to my face. I eagerly told my interviewer what I was working on and what would be in the newspaper the next day. Thus, I scooped myself... (Kaplan 516)

Kaplan's anecdote is exactly what's wrong with using convergence as a cost-cutting practice. It is certainly an extremely efficient method of news gathering, but is the public at a disservice? Absolutely, since it is impossible for a single reporter to cover the whole of any event in a single story or a series of articles. Multiple reporters looking at the same event in a unique, though still objective fashion, would better serve the public.

Of course, multiple independent reporters aren't a particularly good business practice as the competition clearly favors the consumer product over a business owner's profit. From a purely ethical standpoint, it would be wise to not completely saturate a market with just a single source to avoid overwhelming the public in a deluge of similar news. Then again, large businesses and ethics have a slightly greater affinity for one another than oil and water.

Luckily for business owners, they have reporters they believe are eager to take on numerous unfamiliar roles. This is a cost-cutting method of these media conglomerates, to simply reduce the number of staff and have a reporter complete multiple phases of a news story. That means a reporter would have to be extensively trained in writing, broadcasting, HTML, photography, and video to cover a story effectively. And even if this ideal reporter had above average abilities in these areas, there isn't enough time to do them justice given the deadline pressure he/she is facing. The only (nearly) viable option would be to surgically graft all the necessary net-enabled gadgets of converged reporting onto reporters along with nutritious, intravenous fluids to fuel them throughout their work.

This “versatile” journalist is a complete switch from the practice of division of labor that sought to have workers specialize in certain areas. Instead, this localization of labor hopes to create a media monstrosity out of a mere person. A single reporter is simply unable to do the quality of work that is needed for any single form of media. If cost cutting weren’t the motivating factor, then the proper training could be administered and a suitable number of supporting staff could make this utility-knife journalist a remote possibility.

A business-focused view of convergence is exactly the wrong way to approach an innovative idea. If anything, convergence takes more work than a single form of media to work effectively. This isn’t meant to diminish the business aspect of media, just to place its boundaries into greater focus. The *Tampa Tribune* is one converged news organization that Kaplan sharply criticizes. In his view, “the *Tampa Tribune* is, at best mediocre...though both news organizations [a TV station and a newspaper] shared their news budgets with each other throughout the day, it didn’t seem to have much impact on the final news product (Kaplan 518).” Basically, Kaplan sees that this collaboration between television and newspapers didn’t improve the news story since both parts shared the same information. Despite this, the company is reportedly thriving financially but they do little with that profit to improve their news gathering abilities. Once the content of the editorial side is being affected by business decisions, there’s a serious problem within that organization. Good content is what engages the viewer in the first place, not a given media outlet being an omnipresent force in their everyday lives. If media consumers believe that

their content is shallow or (even worse) inaccurate, they will move on to a media provider that understands the specific strains of convergence and addresses them accordingly. This involves more work and an expanded budget, not drastic cost cutting. The media providers that succeed in convergence's lofty goals are going to reach the widest audience with the best content and convincingly outdo whatever competition they face.

The essential lesson to remember is that only hard work and claspng tight to solid, ethical ropes are the only defense against convergence's storm-stricken seas. It is a journey filled with whirlpools, serpentine monsters, and cruel temptation, but braving those perils leads to the dawn of a new information age.

PRODUCTION OUTLINE

The creation of journalistic content was the initial portion of the project. I went to seven out of the 11 UNCP football games and “covered” them. Journalistically, this means I jotted notes, took photographs, interviewed coaches and players, and wrote articles based on the games. Through interviews and game statistics, I completed articles for the other four games.

Second, I had to build the website from *.html* and *.css* files using the text WordPad. This included coding XHTML to create my desired effect in a web browser like Mozilla Firefox. This stage also included visually designing the site. After sketching an outline on paper, I would use XHTML to replicate the drawing. I cropped photos and designed logos for the site using the GIMP, an image editor.. Converting my articles into text files allowed me to create interesting pages with both text and photos. Finally, the site had to have a navigation bar that strung the entire site together through web links.

After testing the site on a local computer, I bought a year’s worth of web space at *globat.com* as my site’s home. I uploaded each of the *.html* and *.css* files and photos using the *Absolute FTP* program readily available on the UNCP campus. The site was maintained through *globat.com* by uploading new files as new articles became available.

A blog from *wordpress.com* was the final addition to the site.

REFLECTION

The most appealing aspect of this project, for me, was mixing the familiar and the unfamiliar together and hoping they weren't a volatile combination.

The familiar portion of the project is the content on my website, Pembroke Pigskin, and the two academic papers. My site's content is exactly what I've learned through my Mass Communications course offerings. The articles and photos are conventional journalism. The two papers, *The Incredible Synthesis of Modern Media* and *Conflict Within Convergence*, are academic papers with a touch of flair. The challenge in these familiar arenas was executing them at a high standard. Certainly, these parts are some of the best work I've done at UNCP. My articles were all tightly written to journalistic standards and contain a great deal of information. The photos I took are the best of my young journalistic career, especially the gems from the Faulkner game. My papers, hopefully, serve as interesting introduction to the continual evolution of media through convergence. *Conflict Within Convergence* is possibly the best piece of academic writing I've done. In total, I'm ecstatic at how these individual bits turned out but they are incomplete on their own. To make this project a success, I felt that I had to step far outside the comfort zone of sideline photography, post-game interviewing, and database scavenging. The entire thesis needed a nucleus that would have visual appeal and harness my stray electrons of photos, articles, and research. My girlfriend said I should build a website. I did.

I had some Internet programming experience due to Dr. Anthony Curtis's Online Journalism class. It was amazing, back then, to see how a simple text file created in WordPad could create a web page. I was hooked.

Learning to program a website, though, is not a painless process. I had to teach myself HTML (hypertext markup language), the DNA equivalent of web pages. Browsing the HTML reference books in the library didn't ease my trepidation. Their bulkiness and poor tutorials were intimidating. I turned to an Internet tutorial created by web author Dave Krishna, which helped me capture the basics of HTML programming. After I finished the tutorial, I felt like I had pieces of a complicated model car with no instructions. So, when I completed a rough version of my site, it looked horrendous with an assaulting number of scroll bars. The project rambled on in this state for two long summer months, until my mother brought me a book from the local library. It was an old edition of the *Visual Quickstart Guide: HTML* written by Elizabeth Castro. Her explanations and, most importantly, illustrations of the various HTML "tags" gave me the confidence that my task wasn't impossible. Without hesitation, I bought the most recent edition of the *Visual Quickstart Guide: HTML, XHTML & CSS*. With a refurbished site and premium web space, I had created my own website dedicated to UNCP football, *pembrokepigskin.com*, but more importantly my own publication.

Becoming a programmer, publisher, and editor-in-chief of my own digital entity represents the unfamiliar portion of my project. For the first time, I had no authority figure dictating how my work should be done. I earned the right to use my

own discretion. Unfortunately, I had no minions to program, photograph, or fetch cups of hot chocolate. The combination of glorifying work—writing and photography—combined with thankless work—resizing photos and coding—is never comfortable. My account of my first substantial update in *Conflict in Convergence* represents an excellent snapshot of web design. The entire process grinds tectonically on your mind and body with so many precise details crashing into one another. Of course, the quaking frustration eventually becomes rewarding as I learned to make fewer mistakes and the foundation of the site solidified. I steadily improved my competency at each new role and they, in return, worked well together as a team.

I consider researching convergence while becoming a converged reporter to be a unique combination. The struggles and rewards of integrating media became a reality as I created my own news source. There were many valuable lessons to learn.

First, deadlines become omnipresent. With the Internet, media outlets are on a constant rolling deadline, as the public demand for information has grown insatiable. News websites update their main pages with breaking stories and important events are blogged as they occur. I felt a similar strain of pressure in doing game stories immediately following the final whistle. It was a tedious one-man job, which blends well with another lesson.

Second, the audience wants varied content but most media professionals aren't trained to diversify. News ziggurats like the New York Times can afford to specialize their reporters, editors, and designers. On a smaller scale, though, individual workers require more diverse skill sets. Theoretically, this would lead to

lessened quality among the component parts. I've often daydreamed if the quality of *Pembroke Pigskin* would differ if I had an entire team of specialized versions of myself instead of just one overworked me. I'm convinced they would have completed a far more professional website. Deadlines and journalistic quality have always been bitter enemies, but now they wage battles every second instead of every day. Despite these complaints, convergence is a necessity, which leads to the most important lesson.

Finally, media cannot afford to drag their feet evolving their methods and structure. People drive convergence, not the media industry. The Internet continuously tears eyes away from newspapers and television screens. Media survival is totally dependent on those spheres and has to chase after them. Conversely, the Internet is a much fairer platform than conventional publishing. It simply wasn't feasible to create a physical *Pembroke Pigskin* publication without sacrificing a large portion of money and possibly hundreds of innocent trees. Even though I paid for web space, there are vast pockets that are completely free. In cyberspace, media cannot financially muscle around diminutive competitors and have to rely on quality content instead. Competition is traditionally good for consumers. Improved news and media content is even better.

This senior thesis seemed like an idea that was impossibly big and unachievable. Both the research papers and the website are far better than I initially imagined. This Honors thesis challenged and exhausted me. But, I intend to achieve greatness far beyond this project. I'm finally prepared.

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APPENDIX A

Pembroke Pigskin

[Home](#)[News](#)[Features](#)[Opinion](#)[Photos](#)[About](#)

Defense wins Black and Gold scrimmage 42-35



Ryan Horton, no. 13, throws a pass as the Braves' defense is in pursuit.

UNCP football played its final intra-squad scrimmage, the Black and Gold game, which was won by the defense 42-35.

The scrimmages were played under a modified scoring system that was used in the 2007 spring game.

Though the score was lower than last year, Head Coach Pete Shinnick seemed pleased with his team's performance.

"Execution-wise, we're much further along than we were," Shinnick said.»

UNCP trounced in final two away games

Braves win last home game 43-22 against Faulkner

Updates

- Black and Gold game 2008
- Photos section completed!
- News: Articles for entire 2007 season
- About page

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Pembroke Pigskin

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News

2008 Spring Practice

April 3, 2008	Black and Gold game
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2007 Regular Season

Nov. 7, 2007	UNCP at North Greenville
Nov. 3, 2007	UNCP at Concord
Oct. 27, 2007	UNCP vs. Faulkner
Oct. 20, 2007	UNCP at Edward Waters
Oct. 13, 2007	UNCP vs. WV Wesleyan
Oct. 6, 2007	UNCP vs. Webber International
Sept. 29, 2007	UNCP at Chowan
Sept. 22, 2007	UNCP at Jacksonville
Sept. 15, 2007	UNCP vs. Wingate
Sept. 8, 2007	UNCP vs. Greensboro
Sept. 1, 2007	UNCP at Davidson



Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Defense wins Black and Gold scrimmage 42-35

UNCP football played its final intra-squad scrimmage, the Black and Gold game, which was won by the defense 42-35.

The scrimmages were played under a modified scoring system that was used in the 2007 spring game.

Though the score was lower than last year, Head Coach Pete Shinnick seemed pleased with his team's performance.

"Execution-wise, we're much further along than we were," Shinnick said.

Both the first and second team offenses played efficiently with the top two quarterbacks, Corey Smith and Ryan Horton, throwing two touchdowns and no interceptions.

The defenses also played well in forcing two interceptions, recovering five fumbles and accumulating seven sacks.

Shinnick also took the time to point out a few standout players during spring.

He commended Josh Humphries, WR, in having an excellent spring. Humphries had five catches for 64 yards and two touchdowns in the game.

Another receiver, Darrin Watkins, was also noted for his play during spring drills. Watkins scored the Braves' first touchdown in the 2007 season against Davidson. His injury in that game left him ineffective the rest of the season.

Overall, the final scrimmage was crisply played despite cold temperatures and a persistent mist.

A small group of dedicated fans took cover in the student section and stayed for the entire game.

"For the weather, I felt great about the crowd," Shinnick said.

Last year, on a much nicer day, there were over 1500 fans attending the spring game.

Unlike last year, the football team will not be going into finals week after this final scrimmage. The team will hit the weight room while the coaching staff makes their final evaluations on individual players.



Ryan Horton, no. 13, throws a pass as the Braves' defense is in pursuit.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

UNCP trounced in final two games on the road

The UNCP football team ended their season with two straight road losses 40-6 to the North Greenville Crusaders and, previously, 10-0 to the Concord Lions.

The Braves final record stands at 4-7.

Against North Greenville, QB Ryan Horton and WR Darrin Watkins connected on a 7-yard pass early in the second quarter to cut the Crusaders' early lead to 10-6.

North Greenville eventually stretched the lead with two passing touchdowns from QB Eric Moeller in the remainder of the second quarter. They added two more touchdowns in the third quarter.

Offensively, the Crusaders torched the Braves for 224 rushing and 303 passing yards.

Horton was 13-24 for 153 yards with two touchdowns and an interception.

The Crusaders ended their season at 5-6.

In the Braves 10-0 loss to Concord, they beat themselves with an excessive number of turnovers.

Concord scored their only points with a late field goal in the second quarter and a nine-yard touchdown pass early in the fourth quarter.

UNCP committed an astonishing six turnovers due to four lost fumbles and two interceptions off Horton. The Braves also failed to convert all three of their fourth-down conversion attempts.

Four UNCP drives that went into Lions' territory ended in a turnover.

After his previously stellar home performance, Horton threw 11-30 for 143 yards with two interceptions.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Braves unleash offense in 43-22 win at home finale



Rashon Kennedy breezes by the Faulkner defense on this 22-yard TD run.

Justin Funderburk, but tension resumed with a missed extra point attempt.

The Eagles' improved play met with good fortune when they returned a Rashon Kennedy fumble for a 47-yard defensive touchdown. The entire crowd gulped at the slim 36-22 lead.

In the final five minutes, Kennedy atoned with an 18-yard touchdown run to seal the game at 43-22.

Despite the unexpected drama, the UNCP offense and defense overwhelmed Faulkner.

Horton accounted for four touchdowns with passes of 53, 60 and 70 yards along with a 1-yard rushing touchdown. In total, he went 15-29 with 360 yards of passing and no interceptions.

"Ryan [Horton] really did a nice job not getting discouraged with the incompletions or the little bit of pressure that he got," said Head Coach Pete Shinnick.

Shinnick also said how well Horton handled first start and his previous roles as the backup and third-string quarterback.

Kennedy was equally impressive with 163 rushing yards at 6.1-yards per carry and two blazing touchdown runs.

The UNCP defense also had a good if understated game by giving up just 15 points and 326 offensive yards.

Shinnick had a pleasant reaction to hearing that the Braves had a winning 3-2 record at home but was quick to point out the importance of the final two road games.

"We've got to challenge our guys to now be able to go on the road and play very well. That will be a huge challenge for us because we haven't really done that," Shinnick said.

UNCP football put on its most impressive performance of the season with a 43-22 victory in the team's final home game against Faulkner University.

The Braves' record improved to 4-5 on the season while Faulkner slipped to 1-7.

UNCP appeared to be dominating the Eagles with a 30-0 lead in the third quarter.

That was when home team lost its previously tight grasp on the game.

Faulkner soon recovered with two touchdowns and a successful two-point conversion on two of their next three possessions to halve their deficit at 30-15.

Ryan Horton, the Braves QB, rebutted with a 70-yard touchdown pass to WR



Josh Throckmorton scores off of a Horton pass.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

UNCP edged out 31-28 at Edward Waters

The UNCP football team lost its recent road game 31-28 to the Edward Waters Tigers.

Both UNCP and Edward Waters are now 3-5 on the season.

Despite trailing 14-0 in the first quarter, the Braves managed to keep the game close until the end.

Ryan Horton completed a 19-yard pass to TE Rangel Moore that brought UNCP into a manageable 31-28 deficit.

Unfortunately, there were only 55 seconds remaining after a failed onside kick attempt, which the Tigers ran out for the win.

The Tigers shredded the Braves' defense with 245 rushing yards. One of their possessions was a one-play 54-yard touchdown run.

Horton split time with QB Cory Smith and threw 7-21 for 70 yards along with one touchdown and three interceptions. He also ran for a 23-yard touchdown.

Smith was 16-26 for 145 yards and single touchdown.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Late interception leads to Braves' 10-7 home loss



Cory Smith, no. 11, hands off the ball to a quickly pressured running back.

Over the next three minutes and 41 seconds, the Bobcats methodically drove the ball until capitalizing with a two-yard rushing touchdown.

On the Braves final drive, Horton followed a long completion with another interception. The Bobcats ran out the final 44 seconds.

The decisive factor throughout the game was the ineffectiveness of the UNCP offense.

"We really only moved it [the ball] in spurts [and] it seems like when we did move it we found a way to self-destruct," said Head Coach Pete Shinnick.

Shinnick credited the Bobcats game plan and execution in the course of the game.

Even opposing coach Bill Struble was surprised by how well his defense played as he looked at the post-game statistics in near disbelief.

"Geez, is that right? 23 [rushing] yards," Struble said.

The game was an overall defensive slugfest with about 600 total offensive yards between the two teams and no scoring until the fourth quarter.

Horton provided the only offensive flash with a 64-yard pass to WR Tim McCaskill and a 5-yard touchdown pass three plays later. That play gave UNCP their only lead of the game at 7-3.

That same aggressive approach, though, eventually led to the game-changing interception.

"[I] probably shouldn't have forced it. He [the defensive back] made a good break on the ball but I shouldn't have given him the chance," Horton said.

Shinnick was quick to distribute the loss to the entire team and not solely on Horton's mistake. He also beamed confidently about Horton's ability to complete the pass if given another chance.



Linebacker John Stokes, no. 59, tackles a Bobcat player in their own backfield.

UNCP celebrates homecoming with a 31-21 victory

The UNCP football team saved its best performance of the season for homecoming as they defeated Webber International 31-21.

The Braves suddenly find themselves in the middle of their first back-to-back wins to move to 3-3 on the season.

A seven-point Braves' lead separated the teams until the visitors tied the game at 21 apiece in the third quarter.

Quarterback Cory Smith and the rest of the offense answered the score with an 11-play, 44-yard drive for a decisive touchdown.

Smith converted three third downs through the air to keep the drive going.

Eventually, the Braves ensured the victory with a fourth-quarter field goal.

Head Coach Pete Shinnick was extremely exhausted after the game, but also extremely pleased by his team's performance.

"For our team at this stage right now, to be able to hold a lead that we had at half was a big step for us," Shinnick said.

The odds seemed slim of UNCP having consecutive victories after two deflating losses to Wingate and Jacksonville.

"They could've gotten frustrated; they could've easily gotten their heads down," Shinnick said. "That's how teams only win one game a year."



Keith Farrington, no. 27, dodged through the defense on this 29-yard reception TD.



Keith Gore, no. 6, charges the goalline to score the game's first touchdown.

Braves outlast Chowan 26-20 for their second win

The UNCP football team won an unpredictable and wild game at the Chowan Hawks homecoming 26-20.

The win places the Braves at 2-3 and Chowan at 1-5 on the season.

The offense clinched the victory by draining three minutes off of the clock with repeated rushes from RB Brandon McLaurin and leaving Chowan with little hope of a miraculous victory.

"Obviously, (we) would've liked a first down there... (but we) didn't give Chowan much time to do anything," said Pete Shinnick, head coach.



Brandon McLaurin is pursued by linebacker Ysidro-Juan Wilks, no. 39.

Overall, the Brave's offense was impressive in scoring 20 points in the first half.

UNCP was able to get on top of the Hawks early with a 51-yard pass from QB Corey Smith to RB Justin Funderburk who dashed down the sideline for the score.

Two possessions later, the Braves subbed in QB Ryan Horton for Smith and then a faked a run in favor of a deep throw.

The result was an 83-yard pass to WR Al Bryant for a second UNCP touchdown but the team then botched the following extra point attempt.

Quarterback Joshua Floyd kept the Hawks in the game with a three-yard rush on third and three and then following with a 39-yard touchdown pass.

The Hawks then missed their own extra point, as well.

The Braves responded by taking their following possession 56 yards and scoring with Smith looping 9-yard pass to Justin Ruffin in the left corner of the endzone.

Floyd and the Hawks fought back by taking their final drive of the half 71 yards and score on an 11-yard run from RB Spruce Lee to close the gap to 20-13.

The third quarter was tense for the Braves as the Hawks barely missed a 43-yard field goal.

That was until the UNCP defense sacked Floyd in the endzone and LB Ben Curti recovered the following fumble for a touchdown.

Victory seemed assured until the Braves missed their second consecutive extra point for a 26-13 lead.

Those assurances further wavered as the Hawks scored on their next drive and converting four third downs in the process.

The score left the Braves with a perilous 26-20 lead and a single blunder would have led to their defeat.



Cory Smith launches the ball downfield to one of his receivers.

Chowan's only response in the final eight seconds was a dropped pass and then Floyd capitulated for a game-ending sack.

"It's not easy, (when) you lose two like we did and they came back to do a good job this week," Shinnick said.

Special teams were still a problem for UNCP as the team missed two extra points and a field goal to make the final score far tighter than it should have been.

Shinnick couldn't explain the continuing problems with extra points and field goals.

"I'm not sure. We're just going to have to revisit that next Monday and see what happens," Shinnick said.

McLaurin totaled 219 total yards on the game by rushing for 137 yards, returning kicks for 70 yards, and receiving for 12 yards.

His efforts were recognized by the ICAA as the offensive player of the week.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

Jacksonville brutalizes the visiting Braves 55-10

UNCP lost on its first extended road trip at Jacksonville College 55-10 to go to 1-3 on the season.

Unfortunately, the greatest losses came as two Braves players—Matt Evans and Seth Warren—suffered serious neck injuries during the game.

"We had two guys get carried off the field, and that's never an easy thing to watch or be a part of," said Pete Shinnick, head coach.

Matt Evans was the starting QB for the team but the neck injury has finished his season.

Luckily, he won't endure any lasting nerve damage.

For LB Seth Warren, it was uncertain whether he would return this season.

For Shinnick, the reasons behind the loss were simple: there were too many big plays given up by the defense and two lost fumbles by the offense.

"We gave Jacksonville every opportunity to be successful," Shinnick said.

UNCP took a beating on both sides of the ball in giving up 502 yards of offense yet only creating 266 yards.

"The score was similar to Wingate, (but I) do not feel Jacksonville is the same type of team," Shinnick said.

The two most recent and crushing injuries are only part of the team's injury problems throughout the season.

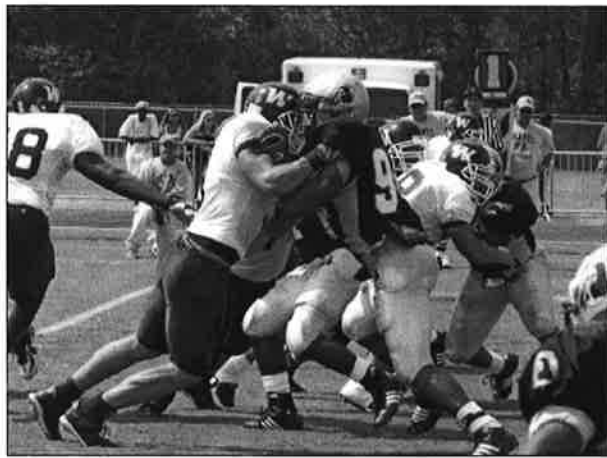
The amount of walking wounded certainly hasn't dampened the team's spirits but their quantitative effect eventually adds up.

"What it's affected, I believe, is our continuity," Shinnick said. "That's something that we as a young team have to learn to deal with."

One of the few bright spots was RB Rshan Kennedy's 130-yard day, which included a 46-yard touchdown run in the second quarter.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

UNCP mauled by visiting Wingate Bulldogs 57-14



The Braves were challenged by the Bulldogs' larger offensive and defensive lines, five fumbles they committed.

The Braves football team was soundly beaten 57-14 by the Wingate Bulldogs at home on Sept. 15.

The loss sends UNCP to 1-3 on the season and Wingate to 4-0.

A UNCP fumble in the first quarter was returned for a shocking 65-yard touchdown that left the attending 4,077 fans stunned.

What had started as a promising drive—with the Braves completing three first downs—had turned into a 14-0 deficit at the end of the quarter.

Turnovers played a large role in the Braves defeat as the team lost all

"They did well to score the points they did, but we made it easy for about 28 of them," Head Coach Pete Shinnick said. "I'd love to see what the game's like without those mistakes."

UNCP didn't score its first touchdown until they were already trailing 28-0. The Bulldogs, though, remained tenacious by following with another touchdown drive.

The deficit for the Braves was 42-7 by the end of the first half and the Bulldogs began to pull out their starters after scoring their final two touchdowns in the third quarter.

Shinnick also pointed to the difference in experience between the teams, as Wingate was their first opponent within Division II.

In total, Wingate's 11 defensive starters and nine of 11 offensive starters were either juniors or seniors.

"We're just young right now. There's no doubt in my mind that we'll be at their level," said Ryan Bishop, Offensive Lineman.

Both of the Braves' offensive and defensive sides were out manned as the home team managed just 255 offensive yards while the Bulldogs amassed 542.

Afterwards, Shinnick seemed resolved in how tough it would be to win against the no. 24 team in Division II.

"A lot of the stuff we were trying against them, we had to be perfect, and we weren't," Shinnick said.

UNCP has also caught the ever-contagious injury bug that has crippled the team's depth at many positions. Five players were injured during the game, including the starting and backup centers, to go along with the team's top three receivers being inactive for the second consecutive week.

Rashan Kennedy, the early offensive star for the Braves, also had to leave the game with a concussion.



Kevin Inman is carried off the field after suffering an injury.

An interesting postscript to the game was how congratulatory Wingate head coach Joe Reich was. He was especially complimentary of the Braves sticking to basic formations for young players and UNCP's overall recruiting practices.

"I really like the job Coach Shinnick is doing here," Reich said. "They're recruiting the right kind of character people."

Though no compliment can dull the edge of a 43-point loss, Shinnick was resolved in maintaining an optimistic outlook.

"Four quarters of football are not going to define who we are," Shinnick said.

Braves score first victory 26-20 against Greensboro

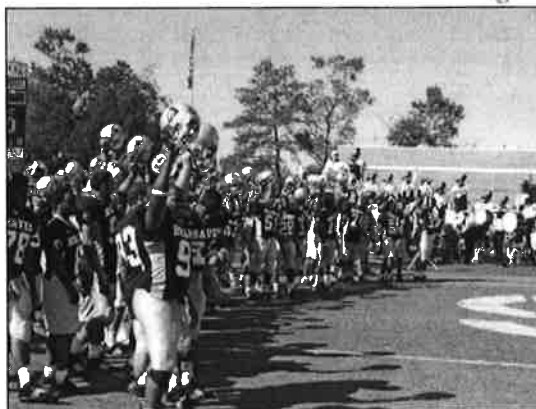
A crowd of 4,209 fans roared, tomahawk chopped and waved the entire duration of the Braves 26-20 home victory against Greensboro College Pride on Sept. 8.

It was an exciting, if imperfect game with the Braves coming back from a 10-7 halftime deficit to win.

There were seven turnovers between the teams-five in the Braves' favor-a blocked punt and missed extra points.

But for UNCP, a couple of thrilling plays in the second half seemingly made the difference in the game.

Freshman running back Rshan Kennedy sliced through the right side of the defense in the third quarter for a 30-yard touchdown that gave the Braves their first lead at 13-10.



Braves players gather for a victory salute to the home crowd.

Unfortunately, the following extra point was blocked.

Kennedy then outdid himself in fourth quarter with a 58-yard rush down the right sideline and-with the entire defense in his wake-tripped at the two-yard line.

Kennedy then quickly drove in for a touchdown on the next play. The score was decisive as UNCP took a 26-13 lead.

"We got used to that defense and made a few changes on blocking assignments," Kennedy said. "We found the crease and just hit it."

While the offense did conjure some incredible plays, the Braves defense held tight when the Pride put together some good drives and dominated at other portions of the game.

In total, the Braves defense held Greensboro to 234 total yards, had three sacks and collected 5 interceptions.

The last of those interceptions by cornerback Troy Russell, no. 7, stopped the Pride on a drive that could have won them the game as they were down just six points.

"It wasn't that hard to break on it (the pass) because from reading the quarterback to receiver I saw the receiver come right for a hitch, so I sat on it," Russell said.

Following the turnover, the Braves offense clinched the game on a fourth and one conversion with a 10-yard Kennedy run.

All that was left was for quarterback Matt Evans, no. 12, to take two knees for the first UNCP football victory in 56 years.

"It started out a little scary but I knew at halftime we'd come back, make our adjustments and come out on top," Evans said. "It was hard because the defense ran something different every play."



Rashon Kennedy scorches the defense for a 31-yard TD run.

Head Coach Pete Shinnick seemed very pleased to win but believes that his team needs numerous areas of improvement.

"I think we can play better football than that. I give Greensboro College a lot of credit for disrupting some of the things we did offensively," Shinnick said.

One of those areas in need of improved play is certainly the special teams.

The two missed extra points and blocked punt returned for a touchdown could have very easily left UNCP winless after two games.

"Very rarely do you play as poorly as we did on special teams and come away with more points," Shinnick said.

One of the bright spots on special teams was the punting and kickoffs of kicker Zach Gormto. He had a booming, 59-yard punt in the third quarter and a few kickoffs that pinned the Pride to their 20-yard line.

"He saved us field position wise," Shinnick said.

During all of the action on field, the crowd at Lumbee Guaranty Bank field was absolutely ecstatic.

Every touchdown was met with jubilation and every penalty against the Braves was met with jeering.

A lone Greensboro fan was relentlessly "booed" and heckled after the Pride's blocked punt was returned for a touchdown.

The "wave" was even successfully completed a few times, which is likely a first at the Belk Complex.

The Braves will certainly need all of that enthusiasm and support, as they will face the Wingate Bulldogs on Sept. 15.

The Bulldogs are a team that Shinnick says is in the top echelon of Division II schools.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
----------------------	----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	-----------------------

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UNCP Football battles Davidson, but loses 31-21



Troy Russell, no. 7, is embraced after a missed interception in the endzone.

UNCP lost its first regular season football game 31-21 against the Davidson Wildcats, but their quality of play certainly impressed the numerous traveling fans.

The score could have possibly been closer, if not for two missed extra points and a missed field goal.

For Head Coach Pete Shinnick, those mental mistakes along with others committed by the team were the main reason for their defeat.

"Every play matters, whether it happens in the first, second, third or fourth quarters. You don't know what affected that (the final score)," Shinnick said.

It was looking grim for the Braves during the opening drive, when Davidson effortlessly drove down the field and scored a passing touchdown.

On the Braves opening drive, QB Matt Evans and WR Darrin Watkins fooled the defense to connect on a 64-yard TD pass.

"He (the defending cornerback) saw the underneath route and didn't think I was going vertical...I looked back at my quarterback, we connected eyes and then it was a touchdown," Watkins said.

That spectacular catch was the only significant play by the Braves' offense in the first half.

On defense, UNCP allowed two rushing touchdowns and a field goal the remainder of the half.

The Braves then turned the momentum on their final drive with numerous chances at a touchdown ending in a last-second 26-yard field goal for a 24-9 deficit.

In the third quarter, the Braves offense line and rushing game found its rhythm.

The second possession saw the offensive line exploding off the ball and Rashan Kennedy slicing through the defense all the way to a 1st and goal opportunity.

The Braves scored their second touchdown of the day with a bobbled catch by TE Josh Throckmorton.

"The offense played together tonight," Evans said. "We saw them on film and said we had a chance."



Quarterback Matt Evans scrambles out of the pocket for a pass.

Whatever chances the team had were dimmed after the second missed extra point for a 24-15 score at the end of the third quarter.

Davidson went on a 96-yard drive to start the fourth quarter that ended in a 10-yard passing TD for a clinching 31-15 lead.

UNCP never caved as they scored another TD with 1:40 remaining, but the missed two-point conversion lowered the chance of a miracle comeback.

Overall, the team was pleased with their performance, but felt victory had only just eluded them.

"We should've won. I think we beat ourselves tonight," Evans said.

In fact, Shinnick revealed a surprising comment while the team was down 24-9 at halftime.

"I told them in the second half, I thought we were going to come out and win the game," Shinnick said.

Kennedy was a revelation for the Braves with 119 rushing yards and 162 total yards during the game. Evans threw for 21-44 pass completions and attempts along with 268 yards and 3 TDs with one interception.

Free safety Talbert Fullwood led the defense with 11 solo tackles during the game. The defense forced three fumble turnovers but didn't make an interception or sack the opposing quarterback.

Watkins was hobbled by a cornerback rolling over his leg, but still seemed upbeat on the future of the team.

"We know we can play. I know what we need to do," Watkins said.

Home	News	Features	Opinion	Photos	About
------	------	----------	---------	--------	-------

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[Home](#)[News](#)[Features](#)[Opinion](#)[Photos](#)[About](#)

Photos

UNCP 2008 Black and Gold game



UNCP 2007 football season.
at Davidson



vs. Greensboro



vs. Wingate



at Chowan



vs. Webber International



vs. WV Wesleyan

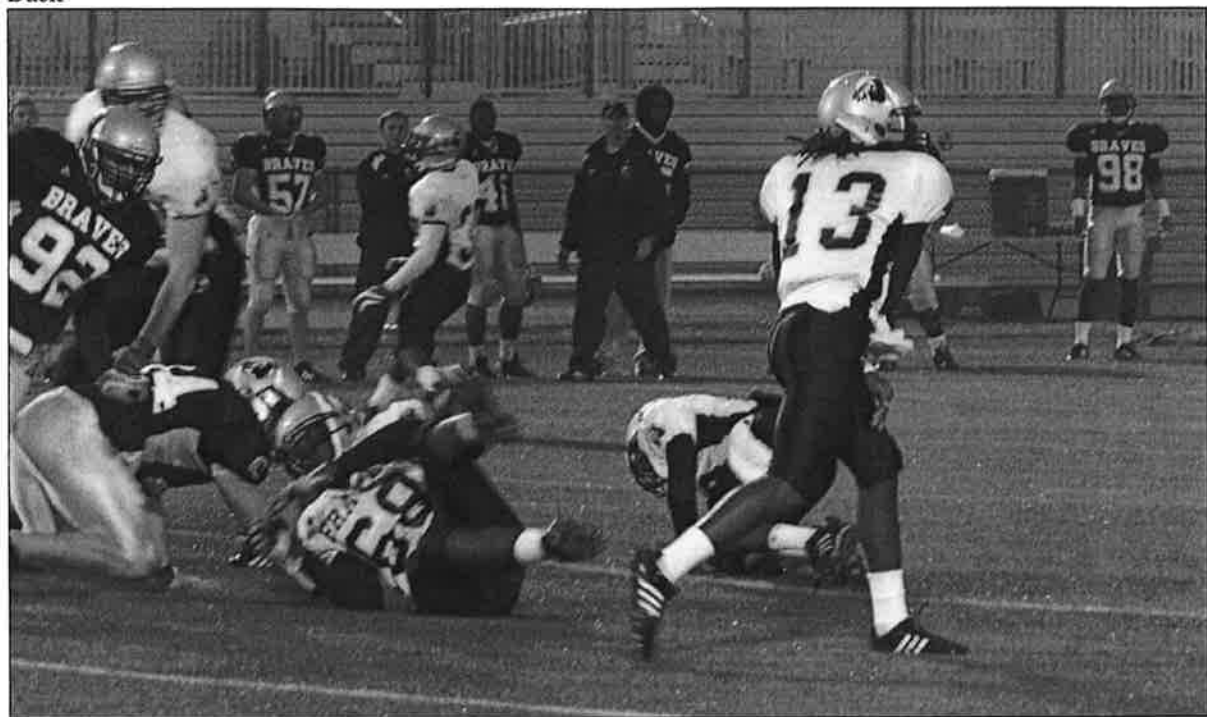


vs. Faulkner



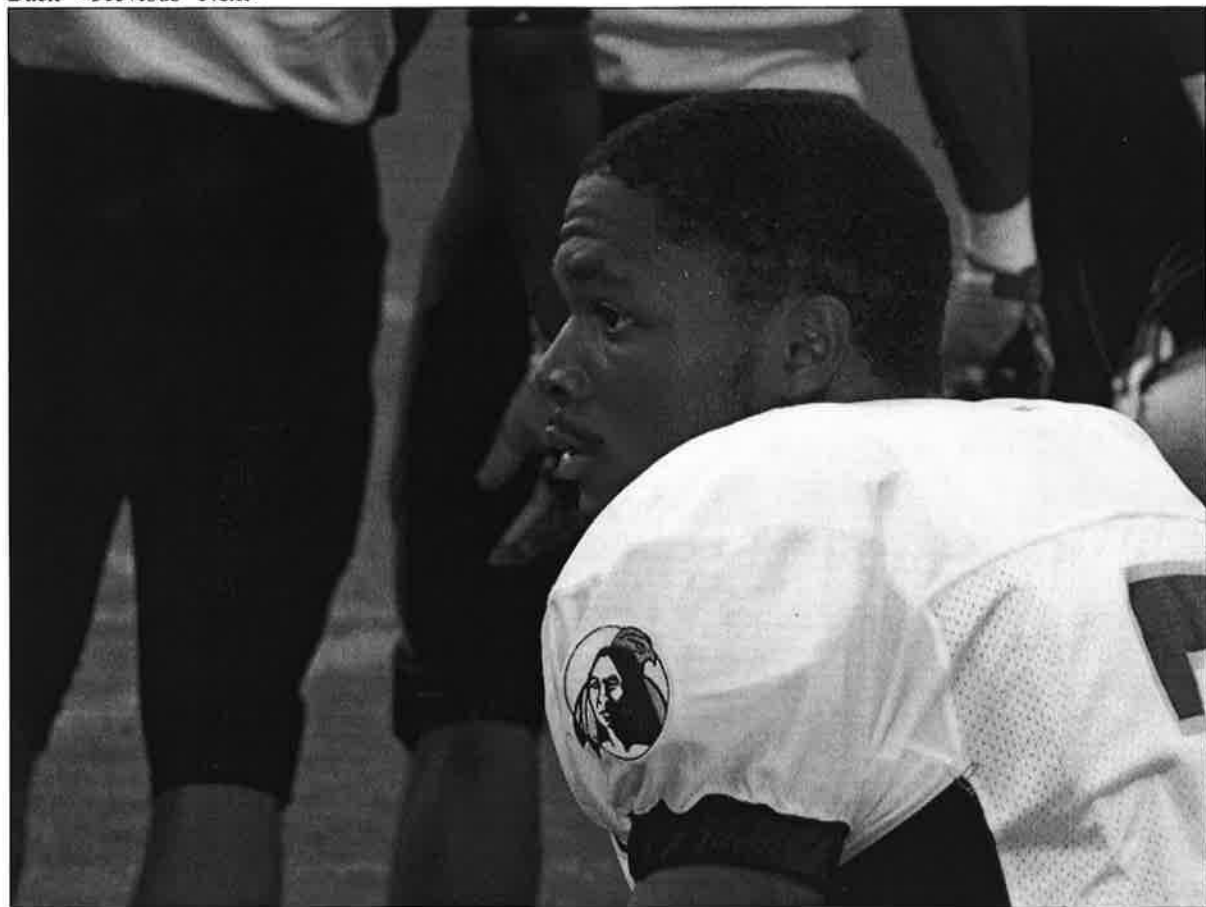
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Back



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Back «Previous Next»



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Back «Previous Next»

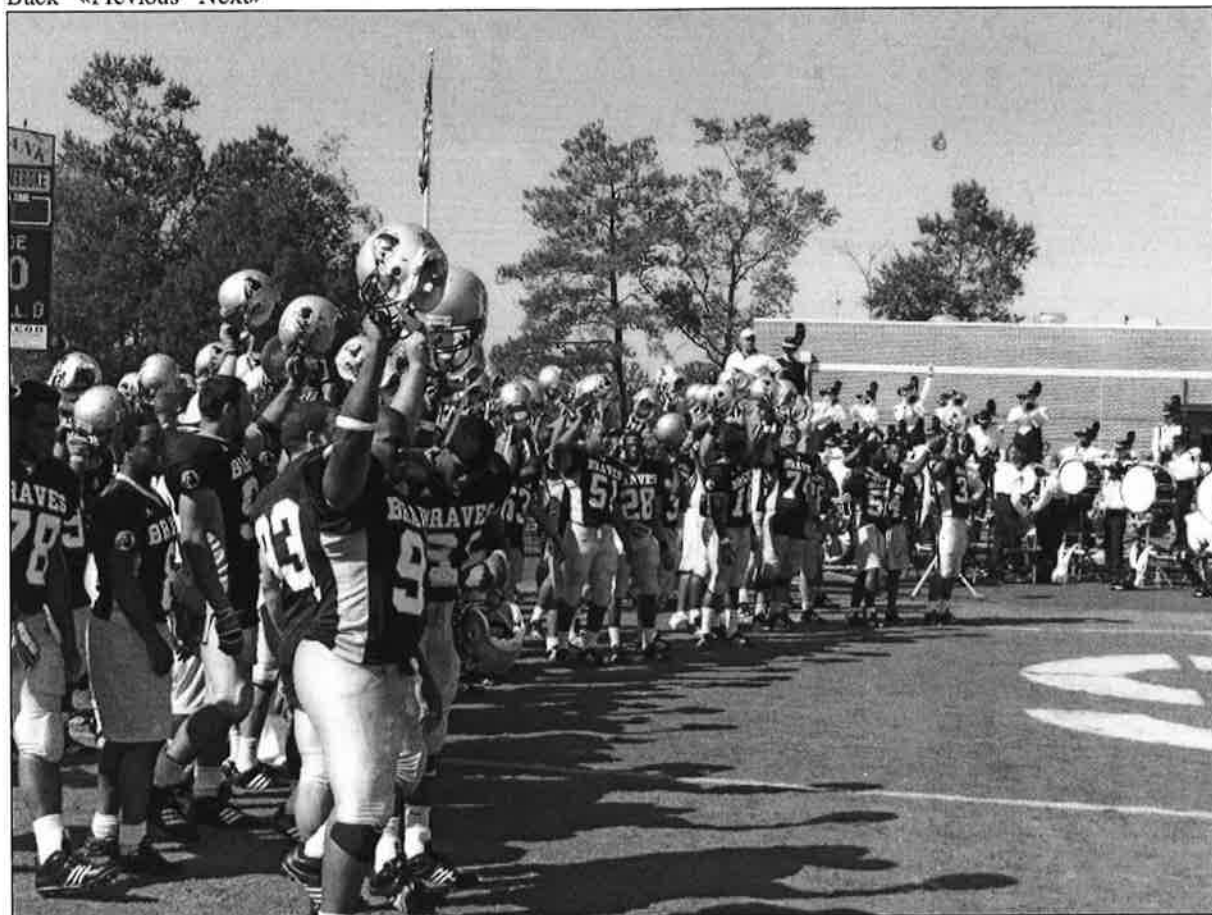


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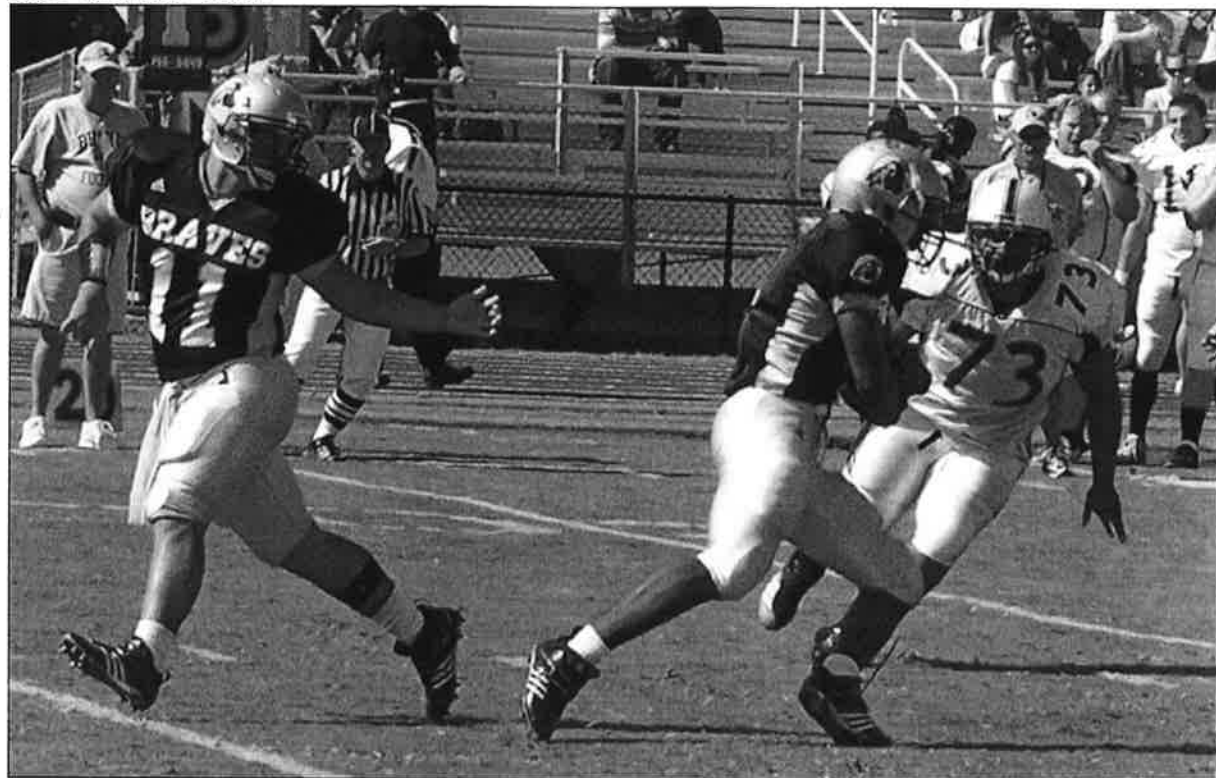
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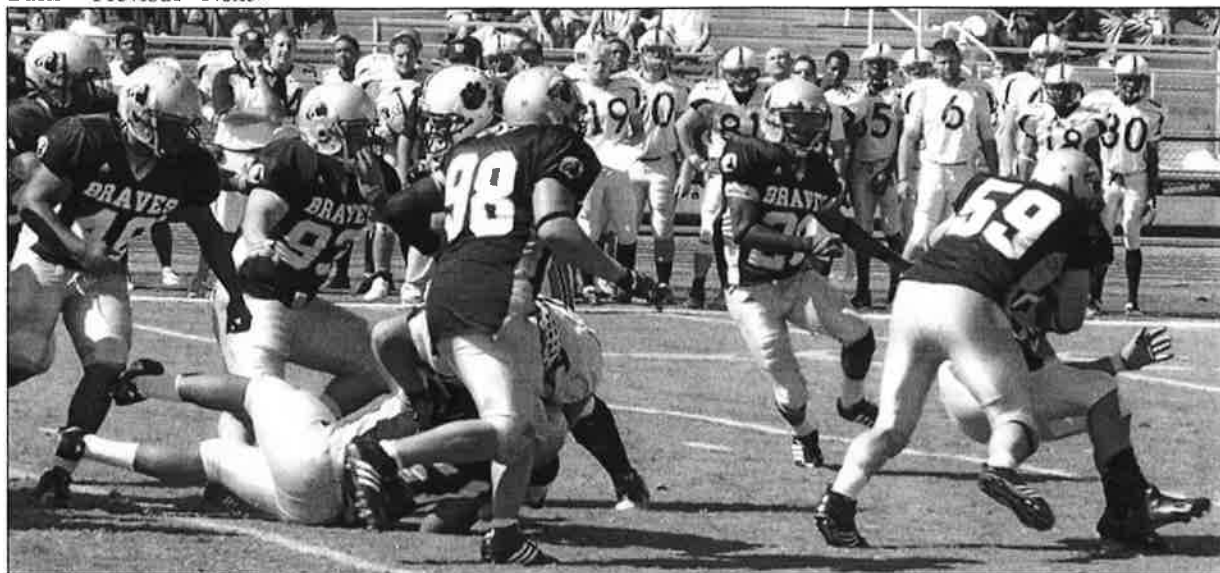


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[Back](#) [«Previous](#) [Next»](#)



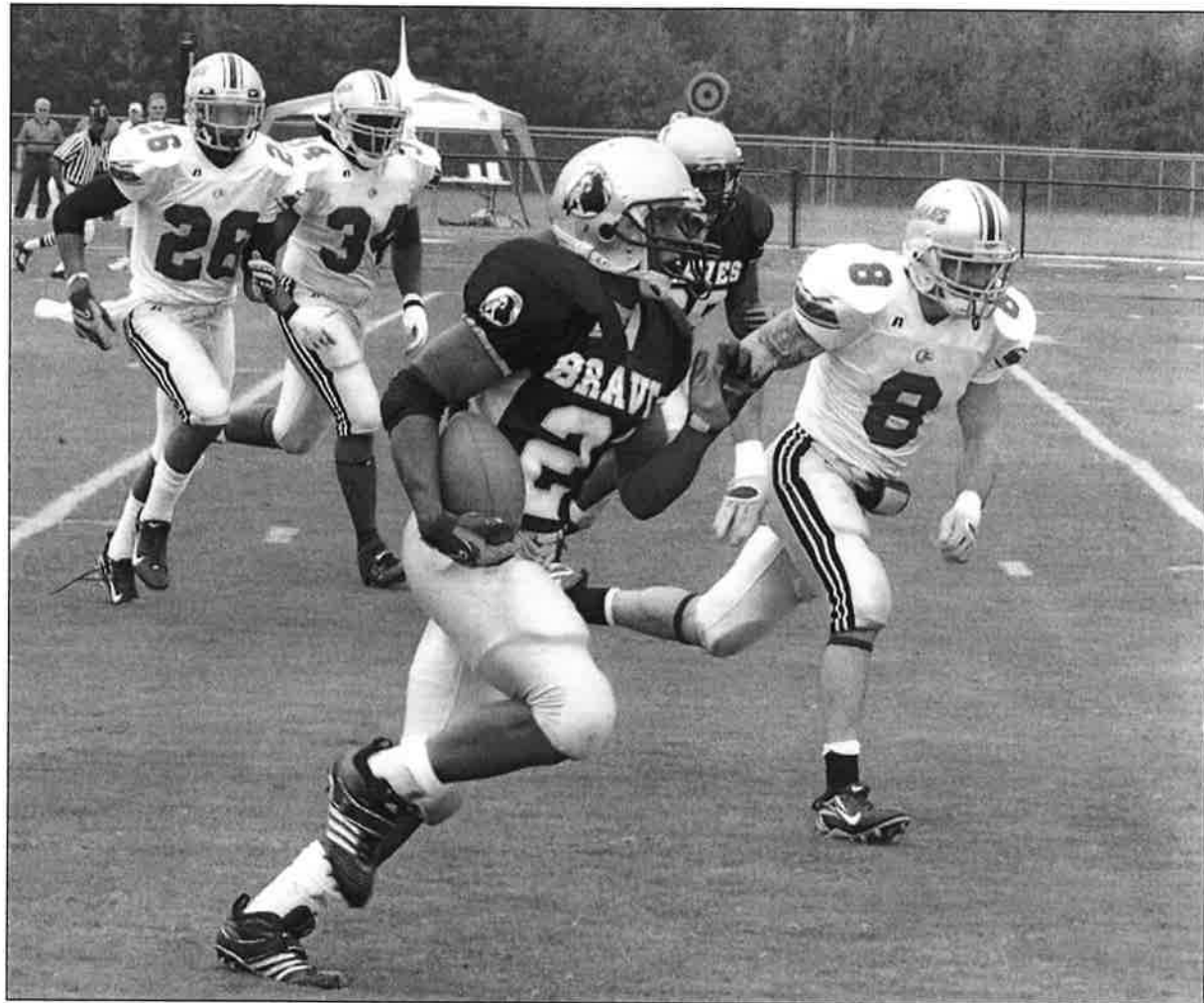
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Back «Previous Next»



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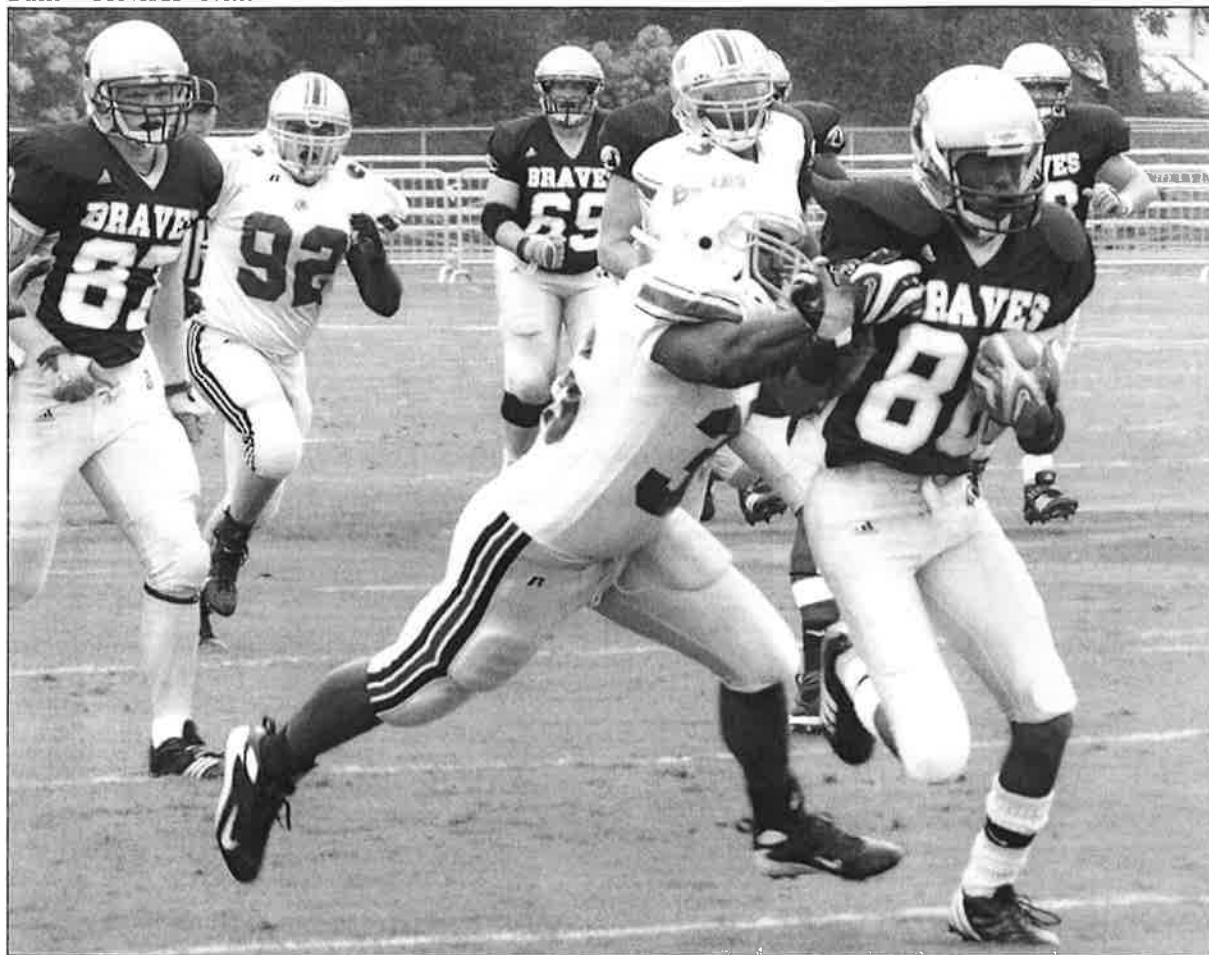




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Back «Previous Next»





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[Home](#)[News](#)[Features](#)[Opinion](#)[Photos](#)[About](#)

Welcome to my (soon to be) fantastic website!

This is Pembroke Pigskin. It's your chance to get all of the news you could ever want about the University of North Carolina at Pembroke football team.

It is the first time there has been a football team at this school in 56 years and this is meant to chronicle this historic season and the people behind it.

More importantly, this is my Honors College senior project at UNC-P.

And just who is this mysterious author? Why, it's Dan Kelly of course, (clearly) a UNC-P senior. I create all of the content on this site and its ruthless web master. Since I'm a Mass Communications-Journalism major it was my idea to create a news site totally dedicated to the football team.

I get to report on everything football related and bring it to the vast population of the Internet.

I will be constantly improving and updating the site, so I hope you enjoy it.



Please, feel free to contact me at dankelly@pembrokepigskin.com.

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